



A N
E S S A Y
O N
L U X U R Y.



[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

AN

ESSAY

ON

THE



[Price One Shilling and Sixpence]

4
A N

E S S A Y

ON

L U X U R Y.

Written Originally in FRENCH,

By Mr. P I N T O.

K

L O N D O N:

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. De HONDT,
near Surry-Street, in the Strand.

MDCCLXVI.

AN

ESSAY

ON

LUXURY

FRENCH



Written

IN TWO

Vols

LONDON:

Printed for T. Bickers and P. A. De Hondt,
near St. Dunstons, in the Strand.

MDCCLXXVI.

ADVERTISEMENT

by the EDITOR of the
FRENCH ORIGINAL.

THIS Essay has been thought
to place the subject in a new
light, and to present a series of
important truths. The approba-
tion of some who have perused
it has encouraged an opinion, that
the public would see it with plea-
sure.

It is to be hoped, that the Au-
thor will not be offended at this
publi-

ADVERTISEMENT.

publication of his work, since he has permitted several manuscript copies of it to get abroad. This edition is taken from one of those, the authenticity of which may be safely warranted.

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT

of the TRANSLATOR.

THE following is a Translation
of a production, written
originally in French, by Mons.
PINTO, of a merchant's family,
of great character, in Holland,
and who is himself distinguished
for his taste and conversancy in
polite and useful literature.

ESSAY

THE TRANSLATOR

of the TRANSLATOR.

ADVERTISEMENT

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

The following is a Translation

of a production written

originally in French, by M.

Pinto, of a merchant's family,

of great character, in Holland,

and who is himself distinguished

for his taste and conversancy in

polite and useful literature.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

of the TRANSLATOR.

ESSAY
ON
LUXURY.

LUXURY is the use which we make of riches and of industry, in order to procure an agreeable existence.

LUXURY has, for its first cause, that dissatisfaction with our condition, that desire of bettering it, which is and ought to be in all men. It is in man the cause of his passions, of his virtues, of his vices. This desire must necessarily make him love, and seek after riches. The desire then of

B

enriching

enriching one self is, and ought to be considered as one among the many springs of every government, that is not founded on the equality and community of goods. But the principal end of this desire must be Luxury. There is Luxury then in all states; in all societies. The savage has his hammock, which he purchases with the furs his chase has procured him; the European has his couch, or his bed; our women lay on rouge, and wear diamonds; the women of Florida paint with blue, and adorn themselves with glass beads.

LUXURY has, in all ages, been a theme of declamation for moralists, who have censured it with more of moroseness than of judgment. But of late it has become an object of panegyric for certain politicians, who have descanted upon it rather like merchants or their clerks, than like philosophers or statesmen. These advocates

for

for Luxury have pretended that it contributes to population.

Now, according to Livy, at the time when the greatness and the Luxury of the Roman republic were at the highest pitch, Italy was less peopled, by one half, than when it was cantoned out into small republics, almost without Luxury, without industry.

THEY have said that Luxury enriches the state.

THERE are few states in which there is more Luxury than in Portugal; and yet Portugal, with all the resources of its soil, of its situation, and of its colonies, is not so rich as Holland, which has not the same advantages, and in the manners of which frugality and simplicity still predominate.

THEY have said that Luxury promotes the circulation of money.

FRANCE is, at this day, one of the nations in which the greatest Luxury prevails, and yet the people complain, not without reason, of a deficiency in the circulation of money, which passes from the provinces to the capital, without finding its way back again, in due proportion, from the capital to the provinces.

THEY have said that Luxury throws a gentleness into the manners of society, and diffuses more extensively the private virtues.

THERE is a great deal of Luxury among the Japanese, yet their manners are still in a state of ferocity and unsociableness. There were more private virtues in Rome, and in Athens, more of beneficence and
huma-

humanity, in the times of their poverty and simplicity, than in those of their Luxury.

THEY have said that Luxury favors the progress of the sciences, and of the elegant arts.

BUT what progress did the sciences and the elegant arts ever make among the Sibarites, the Lidians, or the Tonquinese?

THEY have said that Luxury augments equally the power of nations, and the happiness of individuals.

THE Persians, under Cyrus, had little Luxury, and yet subdued the rich and industrious Affirians. But when they themselves became rich, when the Persians became luxurious, even to a proverb, they

were subdued by the Macedonians, who were a poor people. It was savages that overturned or usurped the mighty empires of the Romans, of the Caliphs, of India, and of China. — As to the happiness of individuals, if Luxury does procure a greater number of conveniencies and of pleasures, you may observe, on casting your eye over Europe and Asia, that it is not at least to the greater number of individuals that it procures them.

ON the other hand, the censors of Luxury are equally contradicted by facts.

THESE censors say that Luxury never exists without an extreme inequality of riches, that is, to say, without the people's being in misery, while a small number of men are in affluence.

BUT

BUT this disproportion is not always to be found in countries of the greatest Luxury: it is true indeed of Poland, and of other countries, which have less Luxury than England or Geneva, where the people are generally in easy circumstances.

THEY say that Luxury occasions the sacrifices of the useful arts to the agreeable ones, and that it ruins the provinces and country, by drawing thence, and centering too great a number of subjects in the great towns.

LOMBARDY and Flanders are full of Luxury, and of large cities; yet the farmers are rich, and the country well cultivated and populous. In Spain there is little Luxury; yet agriculture is neglected; many of the useful arts are not even known there.

THEY say that Luxury tends to dis-
people a country.

FOR a century past, the Luxury and
population of England have been encreas-
ing in equal proportion *; she has more-
over peopled immense colonies.

THEY say that Luxury enervates the
courage of a people.

UNDER the command of Luxembourg,
of Villars, of the Count de Saxe, the French,

* It is to be feared that this, once so just an
attribution to Britain of an increased popula-
tion, is not, at least for the present, exactly
the case: be this observed, without any im-
peachment of the author's argument in this
point, since whatever symptoms of depopula-
tion there may have lately appeared, they pro-
ceed from other causes than Luxury, or even
our wars.

though

though the most luxurious people of the known world, approved themselves highly courageous : under Sylla, under Cesar, under Lucullus, the prodigious luxury of the Romans, when carried even into their armies, took nothing away from their courage.

THEY say that Luxury extinguishes sentiments of honor and of patriotism.

To prove the contrary, I need but instance the spirit of honor, and the Luxury withal, of the French, in the brilliant part of Lewis the Fourteenth's reign, to say nothing of what they are since that time. Or what I can quote more strong than that patriot fanaticism, that enthusiasm of virtue, that love of glory, which at this instant characterize the British nation ?

I DO

I do not mean to collect into one point of view all the good, and all the ill that has been said of Luxury; I confine myself to a summary representation of the principal things alledged in its favor, or against it, and to the showing that both its panegirists and its censors are contradicted by history.

THE most moderate of those philosophers, who have written against Luxury, have pretended that it is pernicious to a state only when it is carried to excess; and this excess they have placed in the greater number of its objects, and of its means of gratification; that is to say, in the number and in the perfection of arts, at that moment too of the greatest progress of industry, which gives to nations the habit of enjoying a multitude of conveniences and of pleasures, and which makes them necessary

sary to them; in short, these philosophers have seen the dangers of Luxury no where so great as among the richest, and at the same time, the most enlightened people: but, in opposition to these sentiments, it has not been difficult for philosophers, who, with more logic, had less good humor than those moderate ones, to prove that Luxury had done mischief even in poor and barbarous nations. In short, from one consequence to another, in order to enable man to avoid the mischiefs of Luxury, they were for replacing him in the woods, and in a certain primitive state, that never did, nor ever can exist.

THE apologists of Luxury have hitherto produced no satisfactory answer to those, who, following the thread of events, and marking the progress and declension of empires, have seen Luxury keeping pace, by degrees,

degrees, with the growth of empires, when corruption getting into their manners, those empires sunk into enervity, declined, and fell.

WE have the examples of the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabians, the Chinese, &c. whose Luxury increased, at the same time that these people increased in greatness, and who, from the vertical moment of their highest Luxury, never ceased losing of their virtues and of their power. These examples contain a more forcible proof of the dangers of Luxury, than all the arguments employed by its apologists for its justification. Indeed the prevailing opinion at present is, that to draw nations out of their weakness and obscurity; to give them a degree of strength, of consistency, of opulence, that shall raise them above other nations,

tions, Luxury is absolutely necessary : and that that Luxury should proceed continually increasing, for the advancement of arts, of industry, and of commerce, and so bring nations to that point of maturity, which is necessarily followed by their old age, their decrepitude, and at length by their destruction. This is the opinion at present pretty generally received, and that of Mr. Hume himself is not very distant from it.

How comes it that none of the philosophers or politicians, who have taken Luxury for the object of their speculations, have fallen on the following train of reasoning ? In the beginnings of a nation, the people of it are, and ought to be, the most strongly attached to its principles of government. In the infancy of a society, all the laws, all the regulations are dear to the members of that society, if it has been instituted

instituted with liberty ; and even if it was not instituted with liberty, all its laws and regulations are maintained by the power of the legislator, whose views will not have had the time to vary, and whose means of maintaining them will not have as yet been diminished, either in force, or in number. In short, the personal interest of each private individual, that interest which is, every where almost, in opposition to the public interest, and which is incessantly tending to separate itself therefrom, will, in that early stage, have had the less time and the less means to oppose it with advantage ; it is then more confounded with it or mistaken for it ; consequently, there must in societies recently formed, be more of the spirit of patriotism, more morality, and more virtue, than in societies of a more antient standing.

BUT

BUT then, in this infancy of nations, it must be confessed, that reason, that knowledge, that industry can have made less progress : there must be in them less of riches, of arts, of Luxury, less means of procuring to one's self, by the labor of others, an agreeable existence ; their character must necessarily be that of poverty and simplicity.

As it is in the nature of men, and of things, that governments should, in time, degenerate into corruption, it is also in the nature of men and of things, that, in time, states should enrich themselves, arts acquire perfection, and Luxury increase.

HAVE not men, however, mistaken for cause, and for effect of each other, that Luxury and that corruption, which, without either's being the cause or effect of the

other, are nevertheless coincident, and keep pretty equal pace with each other?

HAS not private interest, without having a turn to the love either of money, or of pleasure, or, in short, to those passions which introduce Luxury; has not, I say, such a private interest, sometimes in the magistrates of a country, sometimes in the sovereign, or in the people themselves, occasioned such changes to be made in the constitution of a state, as have corrupted it? Or has not this same private interest, or habit, or prejudice, sometimes hindered such changes from being made, as circumstances had rendered necessary? In short, have not there been in the constitution, in the administration, faults and defects, which, very independently of Luxury, have brought on the corruption of governments and the declension of empires?

THE

THE antient Persians, virtuous and poor under Cyrus, conquered Asia; they caught the contagion of Luxury, and grew corrupt. But to which of the causes was it owing; to their having conquered Asia, or to their having caught its Luxury, that they were corrupted? Was it not the extent of their dominion that changed their manners? Was it not impossible for an empire of that extent to subsist in good order, or in any order at all? Was not Persia's falling into the abyss of despotism unavoidable? And where-ever despotism is seen to exist, why look for any other cause of corruption?

DESPOTISM is the arbitrary power of a single man over a great number, by the help of a small number; but the despot could not, without having first corrupted

C that

that small number, have arrived at that arbitrary power.

ATHENS, it has been said, lost her strength, and her virtues, after the Peloponnesian war, that epoch of her greatest opulence, and of her greatest Luxury.

I RATHER take the real cause of the declension of Athens to have been the prevalence of the populace, and the debasement of the senate. When I observe both the executive and the legislative power in the hands of a blind multitude, and at the same time see the Areopagus without power, I from that moment judge that Athens could neither preserve her power, nor her laws. It was by levelling the Areopagus, and not by building theatres, that Pericles ruined Athens. As to the manners of that republic, she preserved them for a long time

after: and in that very war which destroyed her, she shewed more want of prudence than of virtue, and was less deficient in morals than in common sense.

THE example of antient Rome, quoted with so much confidence, by the censors of Luxury, would as little embarrass me. It is not difficult for me to see the virtues of Rome, the strength and simplicity of her manners, take birth from her government and situation. But this government was so constituted, as of itself to keep the Romans in a state of restlessness and turbulence. It made war in a manner necessary to them, and war kept up in them the vigor of their manners, and their patriot enthusiasm. I could observe, that at the time when Carneades came to Rome, and that the statues of Corinth and Athens were transported

thither, there actually existed at Rome two parties, one of which must necessarily subdue the other, as soon as the state should have nothing to fear from foreign enemies: after which, the nature of things must, in that immense empire, lead the conquering party to despotism or to anarchy. So that, had there never been seen in Rome, either the Luxury and riches of Antiochus and Carthage, or the philosophers and master-pieces of Greece, yet the Roman republic being only constituted for a system of incessant aggrandisement, she must have fallen that moment she had arrived at her *ne plus ultra* of greatness.

If again, in proof of the dangers of Luxury, one should instance Asia, plunged in Luxury, misery and vices, I would desire him to shew me that single nation in Asia (China excepted) in which the go-

vernment gave any attention to, or took any care of the happiness of the greater number of its subjects.

As little difficult would it be to answer such as might, by way of proving that Luxury corrupts manners, and weakens courage, point out to me modern Italy, which is over-run with Luxury, and is certainly not martial. I should observe to them that, bating that military spirit, which does not now indeed enter into the character of its inhabitants, their character, in other respects, is still as good as that of other nations. You will, in no part of the world, meet with more humanity and beneficence; society has no where more charms than in Italy, nor are the private virtues any where more cultivated. Italy, partly subject to the authority of a clergy that preaches nothing but peace, or of a

republic, whose object of government is tranquillity, absolutely cannot adopt a martial spirit: nor would it be of any use to her to adopt it. Men and nations never have, but in a faint degree, the virtues which are useless to them. Italy, not being united under one government, and situated as it is, amidst four great powers, such as the Turk, the house of Austria, France, and Spain, whatever were its manners, could not resist any of these powers. She has nothing then to do, but to confine herself to the care of her civil laws, to her police, to the arts, and to whatever may render life easy and agreeable. Upon the whole, then, I should conclude, that it is not Luxury, but the situation and nature of her government, that hinder Italy from having nervous manners, and military virtues.

AFTER

AFTER having observed, that it is not at all clear that Luxury has been the cause of the downfall, or of the prosperity of empires, and of the characters of nations, let us examine whether or no Luxury ought to be in a certain relative degree to the situation of countries, to the nature of their productions, to the situation and to the kinds of productions of their neighbours.

THE Dutch, being the factors and carriers for other nations, ought, one would think, to preserve that frugality, without which they could not afford the freight of their shipping at a low enough rate, and ingross, as it were, that branch of commerce.

If the Swiss were to take from France, and Italy great quantities of wines, of silk,

and gold stuffs, of pictures, statues, and jewels, they could not, out of their own barren soil, produce a sufficiency to barter with foreign countries; so that they could not afford to be very luxurious till their industry should have supplied, among them, the deficiency of their territorial productions.

BUT if, in Spain, in Portugal, or in France, the land should be ill cultivated, and the manufactures of the first or secondary necessity neglected, yet these nations would still be in a condition to support great Luxury.

PORTUGAL, by her mines of Brasil, her wines, and her colonies in Asia and Africa, might still have wherewith to supply foreign demands, and may, consequently, take rank among the opulent nations.

As

As to Spain, however inconsiderable her manufactures and cultivation may be, either in the mother country or in her colonies, she will still be rich in the natural produce of those fertile countries that constitute her dominions in Europe and America, and the copious mines of Mexico and Potosi will maintain the Luxury of her court, as well as the Luxury of her superstition.

SHOULD France slight her agriculture and her manufactures of the first and secondary necessity, she would still have branches of commerce abounding in riches. Her trade to India, the sugar and coffee of her colonies, her oils and her wines would supply her with matter of barter with foreign countries, whence she would draw part of her Luxury. She would also maintain that Luxury, at the expence of those coun-

countries, by the prevalence of her fashions. This nation, long admired by all Europe, is still to this day an object to it of imitation. If ever too the Luxury of France should run to an excess, in a relative proportion to her territorial produce, and to her manufactures of the first and secondary necessity, that Luxury would be its own relief or aliment; it would maintain a multitude of artists and mechanics, dependent on fashion, and by means of the commerce they would occasion, retard the ruin of the state:

FROM these observations and reflections I am led to conclude, that Luxury is contrary or favorable to the enrichment of nations, according as it consumes more or less of the produce of their soil, and of their industry, or as it consumes more or less

less of the produce of the soil, and industry of foreign countries; and that it ought to have a greater or a less number of objects, according as these nations have more or less wealth. In this respect, as to Luxury, it is with a nation as with private individuals: the number of its enjoyments should be in proportion to the means of enjoying it.

THIS desire of enjoying in those who are rich, and the desire of acquiring riches in those who have only the necessaries of life, must naturally excite the spirit of the arts, and all kind of industry; this is the first effect of the instinct of those passions which lead us into Luxury, and of actual Luxury itself. These new arts, this increase of industry, furnish the people with new means of subsistence, and must of course augment population. Without
Luxury

Luxury there would be less of barter and of trade: without commerce nations must be less populous. That nation which employs only the hands necessary for agriculture, must have fewer inhabitants than that which maintains those hands; and moreover, manufacturers, &c. Sicily, which has not much Luxury, is one of the most fertile countries of the earth, and though withal under a moderate government, is nevertheless neither rich nor populous.

HAVING seen that those passions which inspire Luxury, and that even Luxury itself may be advantageous to the population and riches of states, I do not, I confess, see why this Luxury and these passions should be prejudicial to manners. And yet I cannot deny, that in some parts of the world, there are nations that have the greatest commerce, and the greatest
Luxury

Luxury, and which are daily declining in their populoufness, and in their manners.

IF there were any government founded on a perfect equality, upon an uniformity of manners, of morals, and of condition among all the subjects, such as was nearly the governments of Sparta, of Crete, and of some nations we call savages; it is certain, that a desire of acquiring riches could not, among such a people, be innocent. Whoever should wish to enlarge his fortune beyond that of the rest of his fellow citizens, would have already ceased to love the laws of his country, and would no longer have virtue at heart.

BUT in our modern governments, where the constitution of the country, and of the laws encourages and secures the acquisition

tion of property ; in those our great states, where riches are necessary to maintain their grandeur and power, it should rather seem, that whoever exerts industry to enrich himself, is an useful subject to the state ; and that whoever, being already rich, is in the mind to enjoy his fortune, is a man of sense and reason. How then can it be conceived, that private individuals, seeking to enrich themselves, or to enjoy their riches, should ever ruin a state, or corrupt its manners ?

IN order to solve this difficulty, it will be necessary to call to mind the principal objects of government, considered in general.

IT is one of the great ends of government to secure the property of the subject ; but as it ought to have capitally in view
the

the preservation of the whole, the advantages of the greater number preferably to those of the smaller, by keeping up, and even exciting in its subjects a love of property, and the desire, not only of augmenting that property, but of enjoying it too; so the government should especially encourage, keep alive, and stir up, the spirit of community, the glow of patriotism; it should give a particular attention to the manner in which subjects acquire riches, as well as to their manner of enjoying them. It is necessary that the means of acquiring riches should contribute to the riches of the state, and that the manner of enjoying them should also be useful to it. All private property ought to contribute to the good of the public. The welfare of no class of subjects ought to be sacrificed to the welfare of another: in short,

short, Luxury, and the passions that lead to Luxury, ought to be subordinate to the spirit of patriotism, to the good of the community.

THE passions which lead to Luxury are not the only ones necessary in subjects: they ought to have a connection with others, with ambition, with a love of fame, with a sensibility to honor. •

ALL these passions, to be virtues, must be subordinate to public spirit; that alone must keep them in order; without it some of the passions would lead to frequent injustice, and the others to the commission of ravages and state-delinquencies.

THE best would be that none of these passions should destroy the rest, but all keep ballance among themselves, and correct each other.

other. If Luxury should extinguish these passions, it would become vitious and hurtful, and would then have no connection with public spirit; but Luxury remains subordinate to that spirit, unless the government shall have rendered it independent thereof; unless, in a nation where there are riches, industry, and Luxury, the government shall have extinguished public-spirit.

IN short, where-ever I see Luxury become vitious; where-ever I see the desire of riches, and the use of them, contrary or in opposition to the morals and to the welfare of a state, I must conclude, that public-spirit, that necessary main-spring, by which all the social machine ought to be actuated, is broken or destroyed by the fault of the government. I must say that Luxury, which is useful under a good admi-

D

nistration,

nistraton, never becomes dangerous but through the ignorance or bad designs of a ministry of another complexion.

I WILL therefore consider the nature of Luxury in those nations where good order is maintained, and in those where it is relaxed.

As to the counties where that relaxation has taken place, I observe, for example, agriculture abandoned in Italy under the first Cæsars, and all the provinces of that center of the Roman empire covered with parks, with stately villas, with plantations of trees, with high-roads, and I form thereon this reflection, that before their loss of liberty, before the constitution was overturned, the principal senators, fired with the love of their country, and wholly taken up with the care of augmenting

its

its strength and population, would never have purchased the patrimony of the landholder, to make of it an object of Luxury, nor have converted his useful farms into the pleasure-ground of country-seats. Nay, I am certain, that if the lands of Italy had not been frequently divided among the soldiers of the parties of Silla, of Cesar, and of Augustus, who neglected to cultivate them, Italy might, even under her emperors, have preserved her agriculture much longer.

I TURN my eyes towards those kingdoms in which there reigns the greatest Luxury, and where the lands are become deserts; but before I impute this misfortune to the Luxury of the towns, I examine what has been the conduct of the governors of those kingdoms: and to their con-

duct I plainly perceive that not only the depopulation charged upon Luxury is owing, but even the abuses of Luxury itself.

If in those nations, the inhabitants of the country have been overloaded with taxes, and harrassed with personal services, if the abuse of lawful authority has often thrown them into a state of disquiet and dejection; if the vent of the produce of their industry has been obstructed by monopolies, if these faults, and others which I will not mention, have been committed, a part of the inhabitants must necessarily have abandoned the country, to seek subsistence in the towns. There these poor people must have found Luxury, and by devoting themselves to its service, got a livelihood without going out of the nation. But Luxury, providing employment, in towns, for the inhabitants of the country,

only

only retards the depopulation of the state. I say retards, not prevents it; for, in a country thus rendered miserable, marriages are rare; and rarer still among that class of men who fly from the country to take refuge in towns. There, as soon as they arrive, their recourse must, generally speaking, be to learn the trades and occupations furnished by Luxury, so that they must spend a considerable time before they are capable of procuring, by their labor, subsistence for a family. Thus they let slip the season of life, in which nature strongly urges the union of the sexes, and often debauchery joins its influence to divert them from entering into a married state. Such of them as go into service, in quality of domestics, and will have consequently given themselves a master, are always in an uncertain situation; they have neither the leisure, nor the inclination to marry; and

if any of them obtain a settlement, they are generally obliged for it to the Luxury, or to the wanton prodigality of some opulent person.

THE oppression of the country is of itself sufficient to have established that exceeding inequality of riches, the origin of which is imputed to Luxury, whereas the contrary is so true, that it is from Luxury alone that there can be expected any restoration of a balance of property. The oppressed countryman quits his freehold, he sells his land to the master he has chosen, and thus, little by little, all the property of the state gets insensibly into a few hands,

IN a nation where the government falls into such grievous errors, there is no occasion for the help of Luxury to extinguish
the

the love of country. The wretched subject will naturally hate it, and the rest are convinced that its welfare is a matter of indifference to those who govern it. Who can love his country with passion, that sees the principal rulers of the state hold their offices and their fortunes, for no other purpose but their own private advantage? No man now employs his fortune for any ends but his own; thence the abuses in the enjoyment of riches and in Luxury.

THERE are countries in which the government has taken other methods to augment the inequality of riches, and has granted and continued exclusive privileges to the undertakers of several manufactures; to some private subjects for the population and cultivation of colonies, and to some companies for the sole car-

rying on of a lucrative trade. In other countries, to these faults has been added, that of making those offices in the revenue exorbitantly lucrative, which ought to have been only honorary.

By all these means, the way has been paved for raising so many odious and rapid fortunes. If the persons thus favored had not been inhabitants of the capital before they acquired their riches, yet, after the acquisition, they would have resorted to it, as to the center of power and pleasure. They now want nothing but distinction and enjoyments, and flock in quest of these to the capital. But what is the necessary consequence of so many men of fortune being collected together in one place?

IN

IN society, men are continually comparing themselves with each other: they are constantly endeavouring to establish, first in their own opinion, and then in that of others, the idea of their superiority. This competition is always warmest among men whose merit is of the same kind: now there is no government, (except such an one as Sparta, that renders riches useless,) in which men will not found a merit on riches. From the instant that they consider them as meritorious, they will do what they can to appear rich: consequently there will insinuate itself into all ranks, an expensiveness excessively disproportionate to the fortune of each individual, and a Luxury which will attempt to pass for innocent under the title of decency. Every condition will think itself miserable without an enormous superfluity.

IT

It is to be observed, that, almost all over Europe, the emulative passion for appearing rich, and a respect for riches must have introduced themselves independently of those very natural causes which I have just mentioned. In those times of barbarism, when commerce was unknown, and such coarse manufactures as were only of the first necessity, did not enrich their workmen, there was, properly speaking, no opulence but in landed property; the only men of great fortunes were the great proprietors of land: now these great proprietors were Lords of manors. The feudal law, the right of possessing certain estates, kept what riches there were in the hands of the nobility; but the progress of commerce, of industry, and of Luxury, having created, as one may say, a new kind of property, which fell to the share of the commons, the common people,

people, accustomed to respect opulence in their Lords, respected it also in their own equals. These again imagined, that to equal the great, they had nothing to do but to imitate their parade or state. The great, on the other hand, apprehending that this should level to the ground that eminence on which they were raised above the vulgar, augmented their expences, in order to preserve their distinction. Then it was that the Luxury of decency became burthensome to all conditions, and dangerous to morals. This situation of mankind caused the desire of riches to degenerate into excessive avarice; this in some countries became the ruling passion, and swallowed up all the noble passions, which ought not to destroy a love of money, but for ever keep their superiority over it.

WHEN

WHEN excessive avarice actuates all hearts, the enthusiasm for virtue vanishes. Nor does this excessive avarice exist without the most selfish and exclusive spirit of property. Then the soul itself is extinguished; for extinguished it is that moment that it is self-centered. The embarrassed government has no longer in its power other rewards than pecuniary ones, and is now forced to recompence, with immense sums, services which in former times were sufficiently rewarded by unexpensive marks of honor.

THERE is, besides, no end of multiplying taxes, and these lie heavy on the landed property, and necessary industry, which it is easier to tax than Luxury; either because Luxury, by its continual changes of form, eludes the grasp of government,

ment, or because the richest have interest enough to exempt themselves from taxes, it being morally impossible that they should not have more influence than they ought to have. The more their fortunes are founded upon iniquity or fraud, the more excessive and rapid they have been, the greater need have they of interest, and the more means to obtain it. They try to corrupt, and succeed in corrupting those, whose duty it should be to check them. In a republic they tamper with the magistrates, and with the persons in office: in a monarchy they present voluptuary and pecuniary bribes, to that very nobility who are the trustees or depositaries of the national spirit and manners, as the judicial magistrates are the depositaries of the laws.

FROM the influence of men of overgrown property, when riches are too unequally distributed

tributed, from the pompous display of those riches, from the occasional necessities of recourse to men of great fortunes, from the authority they assume, from the conveniences or pleasures to be come at by associating with them; from all these causes, I say, there results that confusion of ranks upon which I have already transiently touched. Then it is that one may bid farewell to that propriety of air, to that due distinction of all conditions, which contributes more than is commonly imagined, to keep up in all the orders of society, their respectively proper spirit. When men no longer keep to the marks of their rank, or station in life, they are no longer attached to the general order; and when people grow indifferent to the duties of their condition, they neglect that outward appearance, that air, and those manners, that would recal to their own mind, and to

that of others, the idea of their duties. Besides, the generality of men are not to be guided either by definitions or by reasonings. There must be something striking to awe their senses, by such distinctive marks as shall declare the sovereign, the great officers of state, the magistrates, and the ministers of religion. Their appearance must be calculated to give just impressions of their power, of their goodness, of their gravity, of their sanctity of manners; the exterior should nearly shew the dignity with which each subject is invested; in short, it should mark out the distinction of classes. Consequently, such an use of riches as should give the taudry equipage of a young lord to a grave magistrate; the train of effeminacy, and a foppish affectation of dress to a military man; an air of worldly dissipation to a clergyman; the splendid retinue of
the

the first nobility to a mere citizen; such an use of riches would necessarily weaken, in the minds of the people, that impression which should be made on them by the presence of those who are appointed their rulers : and with the abolition of the decencies of each condition we should soon see cancelled and defaced, every mark, every trace of the general order. Nothing would recal the rich to their duties, and every thing would impel them to follow their respective ideas of enjoyment and pleasure.

IT is morally necessary that the use of riches should be contrary to good order, and to good manners, when those riches are acquired without industry, or by undue means. The upstart rich are in a hurry to enjoy their rapid fortune, and presently

accustom themselves to idleness, and to a need of frivolous dissipations. Odious to the greatest part of their fellow-subjects, to whom they were unjustly preferred, and to whose interest or preferment they had been obstacles, they do not so much as seek to obtain, what indeed they could not hope for from them, their esteem and good-will. It is especially the fortunes of ingrossers, of dealers in the public funds, or jobbers of the revenue, that are the most odious, and consequently those which tempt most to the misuse of them. After a man has sacrificed his virtue and his reputation for probity, to a desire of enriching himself, he rarely thinks of making a virtuous use of his wealth; he endeavours to conceal, under the ostentation and trappings of Luxury, the origin of his family and of his fortune; he tries to lose in pleasure and dissipation

E

the

the remembrance of what he has done, and of what he was.

UNDER the first Cæsars, there was in Rome a class of men, different from those whom I have been just describing. Thither they came loaded with the spoils of the provinces subject to the empire: the Patricians succeeded one another in the governments of those provinces: nay, many of them never resided there, but contented themselves with paying them now and then a visit; the Quæstor plundered for himself, and for the proconsuls, the latter of whom the emperors often chose to retain at Rome, especially if he was of a powerful family. There the Patrician could hope neither for influence, nor share in the government, which was in the hands of emancipated slaves, called freed-men. It was not even

safe

safe for him to transmit his fortune to his children; that right, so natural, was made subservient to the caprice of emperors; a Roman Patrician thus circumstanced, gave himself up to effeminacy, indolence, and pleasure: there were no longer to be found any remains of the vigor of mind and noble spirit of antient Rome, in senators who purchased their safety by their servility. Yet it was not Luxury that so debased them; it was tyranny. Thus it was not a passion for public shews, that could ever have alone engaged senators and emperors to mount the stage, if a perfect disregard to all order, all decency, all dignity, had not preceded, prepared, and introduced that passion.

IF there were any governments in which the legislature had too permanently fixed

the residence of the principal men in the capital; if the great had offices, or commands bestowed on them, in which there was nothing to be done; if they were not obliged to merit their places and their honors by great services; if there was no excitation for them to emulate each other in utility to the public; if, in short, they were suffered to forget what they owe to their country; then, satisfied with the advantages of their fortune and rank, they would disgrace them by their indolence and misuse.

In several countries of Europe, there is a sort of property that requires from the proprietors neither oeconomic care, nor charges of repair or improvement; I mean the national debts, which constitute a species of fortunes that are very fit to augment

ment in great cities, those disorders which are the necessary effects of extreme opulence combined with idleness.

FROM these abuses, from these faults, from this state of things in a nation, consider what sort of character Luxury must derive, and what must be the characters of the different orders in such a nation. Let us take a view of them in the common divisions of mankind, the low, the middle, and the higher classes of life. Among the country people, there would be no elevation of sentiments. And but little of that courage, which depends on self-esteem, and on a consciousness of strength. Their bodies could not be robust, they would have no love for their country, which would be nothing better to them than the theatre of their debasement

and wretchedness. Among the mechanics in the towns, there would be the same meanness of soul ; they would be too near those who despise them, to have any esteem for themselves ; their enervated bodies would be but ill qualified to bear fatigues. The laws, which in a well regulated government constitute the security of the whole, become, in a government where the greater number groan under oppression, only a barrier the more to debar that greater number even from the hopes of bettering their condition ; insomuch that it is their interest to wish rather for more licentiousness, than for the restoration of order. Such would be the common people, in that corrupt state of things.

As to the middle class between the common people and the great, consisting of the
principal

principal artists of Luxury, of the officers of the revenue, of the merchants and tradesmen, and of almost all those who hold the second places in society, this class, I say, proceeds, constantly instigated by a desire of improving any mediocrity of fortune into all the enlargement possible to them, and the contrivances of low cunning, or the dirty practices of knavery, are too often the means they employ. But when a habit of sentiments of probity, no longer restrains within just bounds the love of money, and the passion for what is called pleasure ; when the spirit of order, and the influence of good example have ceased to make impressions of respect and affection for what is truly honorable ; this intermediary order of the state commonly unites the vices of the highest class of life with those of the lowest.

As to the great, rich without trouble, and decorated with titles or marks of honour, without worthy occupation, they have no other principles of action than an escape from vacuity, an avoidance of that *tædium vitæ*, that anxious restlessness which pursues them every where, which not so much as inspiring any tastes, keeps the mind in perpetual transition from one object to another, amusing it without satisfaction, or without engaging or deserving its attention. Those who are in this condition have no enthusiasm or violent passion for any enjoyment; they have at most a kind of sickly faint fancy for whatever promises a pleasure to them. In this torrent of fashions, of whims, of amusements, of which not one is lasting, and each destroys the other, the soul loses the very power of enjoying, and becomes equally incapable

incapable of relishing the sublime and the beautiful, and of producing it. Then it is no longer a question, which is the most estimable character, a Corbulo or a Thrafeas, but to which dancer the preference is due, to a Pilades or a Bathillus; then the Medea of Ovid, the Thieftes of Varus, and the comedies of Terence, are deserted for the farces of Laberius; political and military talents fall by degrees into disgrace and disuse; the same fate awaits philosophy, eloquence, and all the imitative arts. Men of a frivolous turn, who are for ever pleasure-hunting, having exhausted the beautiful, go in quest of the extraordinary: then the standard of taste becomes unsettled; variety, false refinement and puerility enter into their idea of perfection; little narrow souls, whom any thing great or noble astonishes and mortifies, prefer

fer to it small wit, buffoonery, and ridiculous affectation; the talents which are the most encouraged are such as humour vice, or flatter false taste; and thus contribute to perpetuate that general disorder which Luxury did not introduce, but which will have corrupted Luxury and good manners.

DISORDERLY Luxury destroys itself, it exhausts its own resources, and dries up its own channels.

THE men of ease and idleness, who wish to pass every moment, and without any interval, from one object of Luxury to another, ransack every part of the world for the various productions of art and nature. The works of their own country soon grow out of fashion, and their artists are discouraged. Egypt, the coasts of Africa,

Africa, Greece, Siria, and Spain, all contributed to the Luxury of the Romans under the first emperors, and all did not satisfy them.

A TASTE for excessive expences being diffused through all the classes of subjects, induces the artists to exact an exorbitant price for their labor. Independently too of that taste for expence, they are forced to raise the price of their work, by their inhabiting great and opulent towns, where the necessaries of life are never cheap : in a short time, other nations who are poorer, and more simple in their manners, manufacture the same articles, and by underselling them, obtain the preference at market. The necessary industry of the people, nay even the industry of Luxury diminishes; the power of the nation is weakened, her towns

towns become depopulated, her riches go to foreigners, and there commonly remains with her nothing but effeminacy of manners, with the languor and habitude of slavery.

AFTER having thus examined what would be the character of a nation, in which certain abuses of government should prevail; after having observed, that the vices of such a nation would be not so much the effect, as the abuse of Luxury; let us proceed to consider, what might be the national spirit of a people, that possessing unitedly all the possible objects of the greatest Luxury, should nevertheless keep up their government to order and to vigor, equally attentive to the preservation of the true riches of the state, and to that of those manners that constitute its principles.

ciples. These riches and these manners are the produce of the ease and well-being of the greater number, and especially of an extreme attention, on the part of the government, to direct all its operations to the general good, without exception of any class, or any individuals; and, at the same time, by a just manifestation of such their virtuous attention to the public, to obtain its confidence in them.

THIS greater number ought to be composed of those, who living in the country, cultivate the land. To procure themselves a comfortable subsistence, it is necessary they should be industrious; to this they must be encouraged, by the hope that their industry will better their condition; and they must also desire that it should do so. People sunk into discouragement, readily
rest

rest satisfied with the mere necessities of life, like the inhabitants of those fertile countries, where nature spontaneously produces every thing, and where every thing languishes, if the legislator has not the skill to introduce vanity, and in its train a small matter of Luxury.

IN the villages, in the smallest hamlets, there should be manufactures of implements, of utensils, of stuffs, &c. necessary to the maintainance, and even to the homely garb of the rural inhabitants. These manufactures would contribute to augment conveniency and population. This was the project of the great Colbert, who has been too lightly accused of wanting to make of the French a purely commercial nation.

WHEN the inhabitants of the country are well treated, and live at their ease, the
number

number of men of property increase insensibly among them, which lessens the frequency of the extreme distance between the rich and the poor, and in proportion, the vile dependence of the latter on the former. In this more eligible state of things, the people begin to have more elevated sentiments, courage, strength of mind, robust constitutions, love of their country, respect and affection for their magistrates, for their prince, for the general order, for the laws to which they owe their ease and prosperity. They stand in no servile awe of their lords; they are afraid of nothing but offending their own consciences, or of the common accidents to mankind, as of losing their fortunes, their reputation, or their tranquillity. They will sell their labor to the rich at a round price, nor will the son of the honourable farmer be so ready to

to quit the noble profession of his ancestors, in order meanly to degrade himself, so far as to wear the livery, and bear the insults of a rich master.

WHERE those exclusive privileges, which I mentioned before, have not been granted, where the administration of the revenue is not such as to allow or afford the accumulation of enormous riches, where the government does not favor the corruption of the great, there will be fewer rich men permanently fixed in the capital, and those who chuse to reside in it will not chuse to be idle. There will be few exorbitant fortunes, and no rapid ones. The means of acquiring a fortune being divided among a great number of subjects, will have naturally split the national stock of wealth
into

into smaller lots. Extreme poverty and extreme riches will be equally rare.

WHEN men, accustomed to industry, are arrived slowly, and by degrees, to a great fortune, they still preserve a taste for business. A little matter of pleasure serves to unbend and refresh them, because even their labor is an enjoyment to them; and because in their assiduous occupations, and in the economy of a small fortune, they will have contracted a love of regularity, and a habit of moderation in pleasure. When men have acquired a fortune by honorable means, they preserve such a respect for themselves, as does not suffer them to deliver themselves up to a thousand disorderly fancies. When a man has, by acquiring his riches, served his country, by bringing new funds into the state, or by

F establish-

establiſhing any kind of uſeful art or branch of induſtry, he muſt be ſenſible that his fortune is leſs envied than honored, and juſtly ſure of the eſteem and good-will of his fellow-ſubjects, he will be careful to preſerve both.

AMONG the lower claſſes of the inhabitants both of town and country, there will be a kind of reliſh and ſeeking after the conveniencies of life, and even a Luxury of decency, but which will always have utility in view ; and the taſte for this ſort of Luxury will never degenerate into a ſenſeleſs emulation.

IN the ſecond claſs of ſubjects, there will reign a ſpirit of order, and that aptitude for enquiry into things, to which none are more naturally inclined, than thoſe who

mind

mind their own affairs best : This class of subjects will desire, and seek for solidity, even in their amusements. They will be high-spirited, because no depravation of manners will have debased them ; they will be jealous of the great ; who will not have corrupted them ; they will have a watchful eye to their conduct, and will value themselves upon their right of inspection into it. It is from this middle class that those lights will arise that shall spread among the people, and even ascend to the great.

As to the great, they will be sensible of their having duties to fulfil. It is in the armies and on the frontiers, that those who devote themselves to a military life, will learn that art of war which they have chosen for their profession. The candidates for any share of the government will take

care long before-hand to qualify themselves for it, by assiduity and application. And where pecuniary rewards are never accumulated, even upon those who have done the most signal services; where the great posts, governments, and commands are never given to birth without services; where sine-cures are not suffered, the great will not be so apt to lose, in an idle and frivolous Luxury, their sentiments of honor, and the opportunities of improving themselves. Less harassed with the torture of being tired with themselves, they will not exhaust their own imagination, nor that of their flatterers, in eagerly searching after childish pleasures, and restlessly fancied fashions; they will disdain all vain parade of their riches, all excessive pomp, because they will have real prerogatives, a real merit for which the public will give them much greater credit.

When

When they no longer herd together so much, and while they see about them men less opulent than themselves, they will be less tempted to carry to an excess their Luxury of decency. Sensible of the interest that the government takes in the maintainance of order, and in the wellfare of the state, they would be attached to both the one and the other; they would inspire others with the love of their country, and with all the sentiments of virtuous and strict honor; they would be tenacious of the decency of manners, and keep up the spirit of their rank, which would not be a frivolous spirit.

THEN, neither indigence, nor the necessity of an excessive expence, would hinder marriage; population would increase. Every subject would maintain himself, as Luxury and national riches would be their

own support. Luxury is of three kinds; a Luxury of state, a Luxury of convenience, and a Luxury of fancy; these three kinds take in all the arts purely useful, and all the elegant arts. But when restrained within just bounds, by public spirit, by an application to one's duties, and by occupations which would not permit any one to live in continual need of pleasure; it is divided like riches themselves, into all the manners of enjoying them. All the most opposite objects of Luxury are not to be supposed in the same subject; its different branches, its different articles, would be regulated by the difference of conditions: a military man would have fine arms, and horses of value: he would be desirous of having the troops under his command make a good figure in the field. The magistrate would, in his appearance, preserve the gravity

gravity of his profession; in his Luxury there would be both dignity and moderation. The merchant, the man of business, would be curious in his conveniences; all conditions would have a relish for the merit of the elegant arts, and would enjoy them; but then those elegant arts would be so contrived as to inspirit every one with patriot sentiments, and real virtues. They would not be to the spectators of the productions from them, merely objects of dissipation, but convey to them useful lessons, and serve as models of conduct. The rich, who have any elevation in their own heart, contribute to elevate the soul of the artists; they will not bespeak of them a simpering Galathea, a pretty Daphnis, a Magdalen, a Jerom in the desert; they will rather propose to them their representing a Saint Hilaire dangerously wounded, and uncon-

cernedly for himself, pointing out to his son the spot where there lay bleeding, and lost to his country, the great Turenne.

SUCH was the use of the elegant arts in Greece before the governments in it were corrupted. Such is still their use, at this day, in Europe, among those enlightened nations, that have not entirely lost sight of the principles of their constitution. France has had a tomb executed by Pigalle, for the general who covered her with glory. Her churches contain awful sepulchral monuments, erected to the honor of subjects who have been an honor to herself; and her painters have often consecrated their art, by the pictures of her national worthies. Britain built the palace of Blenheim to the glory of the Duke of Marlborough; her poets and her orators are continually celebrating

celebrating their illustrious countrymen, already so greatly recompenced by the applause of the nation, and by the honors bestowed on them by the government. What elevation, what love of virtue, of order, of humanity, do not the compositions of a Corneille, an Addison, a Pope, a Voltaire, inspire? If some poet, now and then, attunes his lute to the celebration of loose mirth and voluptuousness, his verses become the expressions which a happy people adopt in the moments of a transient intoxication of joy, that takes nothing from their occupations, nor from their duties.

IT is from a well governed people's own sentiments, that eloquence receives its power and its charms; eloquence that might rekindle sentiments of patriotism in the very moments when it should seem ready to expire.

pire. Philosophy, whose great objects are nature, man, politics, and manners, employs herself with zeal to throw useful lights on the principal duties of mankind, to show to society its solid foundations, which nothing but error could shake. Let us but animate ourselves with a love of our country, of order, of the laws, and though elegant arts will no longer prophane their employ, by devoting themselves to superstition or to libertinism; they will chuse subjects useful to manners, and will execute them with vigor and sublimity.

THE use of riches, dictated by a spirit of patriotism, is not confined to mean personal interest, and to false and childish enjoyments. In that case, Luxury is not at all in opposition to the duties of a father, of a husband, of a friend, of a man. The
appearance

appearance of two poor young people, whom a man of fortune shall have just united in marriage, when he chances to pass by their cottage and sees them happy, must give him a pleasure more exquisite, more pure, and more durable, than the sight of the groupe of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus placed in his garden. I cannot think, that in a well governed state, where consequently the love of country will be the prevailing passion, the finest China images, or shaking mandarins, can make their possessors so happy, as that individual would be, that should have voluntarily contributed part of his fortune to the reparation of a high-road, or to any public benefit.

THE excess of Luxury does not consist in the multitude of its objects, or of its
means

means of gratification. Luxury is seldom excessive in England, though there is, in that nation, every kind of pleasure. It did not become so in France, till after the misfortune of the war in 1700 threw the revenue into disorder, and occasioned some abuses. There was a more diffusive Luxury in the best times of the reign of Lewis the fourteenth than in 1720, and yet in 1720, Luxury was more excessive.

LUXURY is excessive in all those occasions, when individuals sacrifice to their ostentation, to their convenience, to their fancy, their duty and the interests of the public; nor are individuals led into this excess but by some defects in the constitution of their country, or by some faults in the administration. In this case, it does not signify whether the nations are rich or poor,

poor, civilized or barbarous : when the love of country, and the useful passions are not kept up among them, their manners will be depraved, and Luxury will assume the character of the current manners. In such a people there can be nothing but imbecillity, indolence, languor, dispiritedness. The empire of Morocco is neither policed, nor enlightened, nor rich ; while some fanatics in the emperor's pay, by oppressing the country in his name, but for their own profit, have made of that people a herd of slaves. Under those reigns, so weak, and full of mal-administration, of Philip the III^d, Philip the IVth, and Charles the II^d, the Spaniards were ignorant and poor, without nervousness of manners, as without industry. — They had preserved no virtues, but such as religion ought to give ; and there was even in their
armies

armies at once Luxury without taste, and extreme misery. In those countries where there reigns a barbarous Luxury, without art, and without taste, the unjust and harsh treatment which the weaker every where undergo from the stronger, is still more atrocious. Who does not know the horrors of the feudal government, and what, in those times, was the Luxury of the lords? On the banks of the Oronoko, mothers rejoice when they can secretly drown or poison their female infants, to save them from the cruel drudgery to which they are condemned by the ferocious laziness, and the savage Luxury of their husbands.

A LITTLE Emir, a Nabob, and their principal officers, crush a whole people, to maintain a numerous seraglio; a petty
 4 German

German sovereign ruins agriculture by the quantity of game that he keeps up in his petty dominions ; a savage mother sells her children to buy some ornamental baubles, and a little brandy. In civilized countries, a lady keeps state, as 'tis called, and leaves her children destitute, without patrimony, without means of maintenance.

IN Europe, a young lord forgets the duties of his rank, and gives himself up to the tastes in fashion, which pass for polite, and perhaps to the elegant arts. In Africa, a negro prince passes his time in sucking a sugar cane, and dancing.

SUCH is Luxury in countries governed by the will of the strongest. Without judgment and without morals, Luxury puts on the character of the nations among
which

which it exists; sometimes effeminate like them, sometimes like them too, cruel and barbarous. I am, however, apt to think, that as to the people of any nation, it would be better for them to obey frivolous Epicureans, than warlike savages, and to maintain the Luxury of voluptuous and intelligent knaves, than that of heroic and ignorant robbers.

SINCE then the desire of enriching one's self, and that of enjoying those riches, are passions natural to men in a state of society; since those desires maintain, enrich, and animate all great societies; since Luxury, is a good, and of itself does no harm, can it be right, either as a philosopher, or as a sovereign, to attack Luxury abstractedly considered?

THE

THE sovereign will implicitly reform the abuses that may be made of Luxury, and the excesses to which it may have risen, when he shall reform in the administration, or in the constitution, those faults or defects which bring on those abuses or those excesses.

IN a country, where its riches shall have been collected or condensed together in a capital, so as to have fallen into a small number of private hands, among whom there would doubtless reign the greatest Luxury; it would be a great absurdity to think of reducing all on a sudden, men of that overgrown property, to the necessity of diminishing their Luxury; this would be to shut up the channels through which their riches might recirculate to the poor; this would be driving to despair an innumerable

G

merable

merable multitude of subjects to whom Luxury gives bread; or else, those subjects, if they are mechanics, being less attached to their country, than the agricultors, would go over, in crouds, to foreign nations.

WITH such an extensive commerce as now prevails, with so universal a spirit of industry, with such a multitude of arts brought to perfection, it must be a vain scheme to think, now-a-days, of bringing Europe back to her antient simplicity, which would be only bringing her back to weakness and to barbarism. Luxury then, contributing to the greatness, and to the strength of states, and to the happiness of mankind, the point should be, to encourage, to enlighten, and to direct it.

THERE is but one kind of sumptuary laws that is not absurd, and that is, such as should abolish every branch of Luxury which must be procured from foreign nations, or any branch of Luxury that should too much favor one kind of industry, at the expence of a number of others : such sumptuary laws then, as give to Luxury a proper direction, may be useful.

THOSE sumptuary laws, which tend to diminish Luxury, can be of no use. In the case of too great an inequality of riches, of sloth and inactivity in the rich, and of the extinction of public spirit, Luxury will for ever make transitions from one abuse to another ; if you take from it one of its means, it will substitute another, equally contrary to the general good.

PRINCES who did not perceive the true causes of a change of manners, have laid the blame sometimes on one object of Luxury, sometimes on another; conveniences, fancies, the elegant arts, philosophy, have all, in their turns, been proscribed by the Roman and Greek emperors; none of them had the discernment to see that Luxury did not form the manners, but took the character of the manners, and the impressions of the government.

THE first operation to be proceeded on towards reducing Luxury to order, and for restoring the balance, would be to ease the burthens laid on agriculture. A prince, of our days, has, in my humble opinion, committed a very great error, in his forbidding the peasants to settle in his towns: it is only by rendering their condition easy and agreeable

to

to them that it can be good policy to render it necessary to them: then indeed it may be attended with no bad consequence to lay moderate taxes on those superfluities of the artists of Luxury with which the town supplies the country, that country where the inhabitants enjoy a life of happiness and security.

It must only be by little and little, by obliging the men of office to attend personally the duties that call them into their respective provinces, that you ought to think of diminishing the number of the inhabitants of the capital.

If you would have the rich more separate, the mass of wealth must be more divided; but I propose no agrarian laws, no new repartition of property, no violent methods.

thods. Let there be no longer any exclusive privileges for certain manufactures, and for certain kinds of trade ; let the administration of the revenue be less lucrative ; let fewer places and benefices be accumulated on the same heads ; let idleness be punished by shame, by disgrace, or by the loss of employments ; and without attacking Luxury in itself, without even laying the rich under too great restraints, you will see the national riches insensibly divide and increase ; you will see Luxury at the same time divide and enlarge itself with them, and every thing will fall into proper order.

I AM sensible that the greatest part of the truths contained in this tract ought to have been treated of more fully ; but I have contracted every thing into a narrow compass, because I am hazarding an Essay, and

not

not writing a book. I entreat the reader to divest himself equally of the prejudices of Sparta and of Sibaris, and in the application which he may make to his own times, or to his own nation, of some strokes interspersed in this work, to be pleased to consider his nation and times, as I do mine, without any sort of prepossession for or against them; without, in short, any enthusiasm of fond partiality, or any acrimony of ill humor.

E N D.

not writing a book. I entreat the reader
to divest himself equally of the prejudices
of Spain and of Britain, and in the appli-
cation which he may make to his own
times, or to his own nation, of some strokes
interfered in this work, to be pleased to
consider his nation, as I do mine,
without any : or opposition for or
against them; and that, any en-
thusiasm of fond partiality, or any acrimony
of ill humor,



